18: Godwin-Austen G-3 (ca. 1872) 1875 AR7
Khasi AR7

rude stone monuments. At the village of Nougshai, near Shillong, are to be seen some very striking monoliths; and although they do not come up quite to the length of those at Nurtiang (noticed by Dr. Hooker in his "Himalayan Journals"), yet they are very worthy of being mentioned. They stand on the open spur just above the village, and have been worked out of the beds of the Shillong sandstone series, and some of the smaller blocks have been taken from the conglomerate beds, the lowest in the series, and which come in, in the bed of the ravine, to the north of the spur. There are a number of monuments on this site, large and small, arranged both in line and on two sides of a square; the two largest have their central monoliths—height, 24 ft. 3 in.; width, 5 ft. 6 in.; thickness, 8 in.; and height, 23 ft. 2 in.; width, 2 ft. 9 in.; thickness, 1 ft., respectively.

Plate ii., which is taken from a photograph by Mr. William Robert, Assistant Surveyor in the Khasi Hills survey party, gives an excellent idea of the second largest structure, showing the very massive flat-stone, the "Mao Kynthai," in front. This structure consisted of thirteen upright stones, which could not all be brought into the field of the camera; but the six outside stones on the right are shown. Many of the slabs in the adjacent monuments have been overthrown and broken quite recently, perhaps by Sepoys and camp followers from the military station close by. At one time a mountain battery of Eurasian Artillery was quartered there, and I attribute the overthrow of so many of the stones in the neighbourhood to their handiwork, who would look on such amusement as a "great lark." The Sepoy (native of India) is not of a mischievous disposition; the European and half-European (uneducated) is markedly so. Thus the monument with the highest stone is imperfect, and it must, when perfect, have been a very handsome one. This is a sad pity, after the time and labour that must have been expended in its erection.

I did not observe any new slabs anywhere in the immediate neighbourhood. Nougshai must formerly have been a large and powerful village; it stands on a naturally very strong position, and old lines of fortification are to be traced on many sides, especially on the approach from the direction of the Falls of the Umiam. These old lines of defence are on a curious system: a ditch and bank have been carried forward from the main defences from 200 to 300 yards down the ridge of the spurs, thus effectually preventing an enemy working round the hill sides below the villages.

This fortified site points to a state of things in these hills when the relations between the large village communities or

Uptill now the main sources of forest revenue in the district are timber, limestone, lac, bay leaf and elephants. 13

2.6 **Agriculture.**—The greater proportion of population of the distict subsist on agriculture. The staple crops raised in the district are wet and dry rice, various kinds of millets, maize, potatoes, pineapples, oranges, arecanut, betel-leaf and bay leaf. To a smaller extent they grow in the gardens round their houses vegetables, pulses and occasionally sugarcane. 24

2.6.1 **The main crops : Rice.**—While wet rice is grown in the valleys with which the hills are intersected, dry rice is grown on the hill sides. Highland rice is seldom grown twice running on the same spot for after one crop the soil is exhausted and a fallow period of four to five years is usually allowed. Jowai subdivision is predominantly a wet rice producing area. In Shillong subdivision main wet rice pockets are the Bhoi area stretching upto the sung valley and the northern portion of the plateau, the Mylliem state, the south-western portion of the district and the southern plain portion of the district adjoining East Pakistan. Dry rice is grown more or less through out the district. While Jowai subdivision can claim self sufficiency in rice, Shillong subdivision is a deficit area and the people in this subdivision particularly those in the southern portion (border area) of the district have to depend on supplies from outside. Though there is no reliable statistices of the area under rice, a rough estimate is given elsewhere in the land utilisation table. 243

Maize and millet.—Are two important food crops of the district grown more or less throughout the district.

Potatoes are extensively grown in the higher slopes and in the lower land which are well drained. Generally two crops of potatoes are raised annually in the district. In respect of production and export of potato this district occupies the topmost position in the State of Assam. 244

Orange, betel leaf and arecanut are most extensively grown in the southern base of the hills, *i.e.* all over the border areas. Oranges are also grown in Bornihat areas, in the northern portion of the district. Orange and betelnut plantations extend from the foot of the hills to a height of about 1500 feet and are carried up the ravines which score the southern face of the high plateau. The district is an important producer of Bay-leaf which is abundantly found in the border areas of the district. Other valuable cash crops of the district are black pepper, turmeric, chillies, ginger, pineapple and various other fruits. 245

2.6.2 **Agricultural seasons.**—For wet rice, the lands which are naturally irrigated by virtue of their very location, are ploughed or hoed by about the middle of February and seed sown in May or June. Harvesting takes place in October and November. For dry rice, the land is hoed by about the middle of September, the solds are collected into little heaps and burnt and by February the land is again hoed up and the seed sown in April - May. Harvesting goes 243

21: Ehrenfels E-4,5 (1950) 1953 AR7 Khasi AR7

on a historical past, different from that of the Khasi proper, the former having been ruled by the powerful, but somewhat Hinduised dynasty of the Jaintia Rajas until the Jaintia Wars of the British; the latter by small independent chiefs. Yet Jaintia social organization appears on the whole to preserve the matrilineal social structure clearer and to be less influenced by plains-acculturation, than that of the Khasi, though a few features of Brahmanical religious observances and also some traces of racial admixture are found in the immediate vicinity of Jowei, the former summer residence of the Jaintia Rajas. Stronger no doubt, than this influence, was that exercised by the British and non-Assamese Indians in the provincial capital Shillong since 1866. Methods of agriculture and other aspects of material civilization differ but little in the Jaintia- and Khasi plateau-areas.

The same cannot be said of both: the Wár-Khasi and Wár-Jaintias. Linguistically their affiliations are with the Khasi or Jaintias respectively, in the plateau-areas. Economically, however, both Wár-groups form a separate pan-leaf cultivating unit in the little accessible steep southern slopes of the Khasi- and Jaintia Hill massif. Both Wár-groups live in the environment of luscious tropical flora and fauna, sharply differentiated from the cool, barren plateau with its perennial winds and the heroic, if solitary beauty of its highland heaths, which forms the background of both the Khasi- and Jaintia plateau-groups.

The age of the Wár-Khasi and -Jaintias, as one independent economic, — and two half-independent dialectical linguistic entities, is an intricate problem. The two Wár-groups subsist on pan-leaf cultivation as a money crop, grown in the thick tree-gardens as creepers; not on food-cultivation, as do the plateau-groups, because there is insufficient space on the steep slopes, for vegetable gardens or -fields. The pan-leaf cultivators therefore depend on food, purchased from outside. The slopes seem to have been uninhabited until not long ago. Yet pan-leaf chewing is such an integral part of Khasi life, that until quite recently, and occasionally even now, a distance between two places is not measured by the number of hours used for walking, but by the number of betelnut- and pan-leaf packages, consumed on the way. Also the common benediction among Khasi expresses the wish that so and so may eat pan in the Garden of God. Yet pan-cultivation and the settlements of the Wár-people as pan-leaf cultivators in the southern slopes seem comparatively young. Pan-cultivation on the plateau is impracticable. It is therefore possible that pan was for a long time only a much valued import article from the plains, bartered against Khasi ore and iron tools, though it is now an export article from the Wár-country, brought to the markets of the plains, by both Wár-Khasi and Wár-Jaintia women and men.

According to a tradition, across which I came among the Nonglamin clan of the Nongmuker village, the ancestors of the present Wár people were on the plateau at a time when no pan-cultivation was going on in the slopes and none of the present big estates of pan-tree gardens was yet held by their present (Wár-) owners. A not distant ancestor of a Nonglamin clan-member who about two or three generations ago told the story to U Siang (one of